

Middletown Open Space & Fields Committee

Minutes of Meeting

May 16, 2012

A meeting of the Open Space & Fields Committee took place on Wednesday, May 16, 2012 at 6 p.m. in the Community Room of the Middletown Police Station, 123 Valley Road, Middletown, Rhode Island. The meeting was called to order by Mason Hawes, Chairman.

Member Present: Anne Baptista, Nicholas Coogan, John Pinto, Ed Sisk and Ralph Thomas

Members Absent: Cheryl Boergesson, Christian Lambiase and Austin Pendergast

Ex-officio Members:

Present: Bruce Long, Town Council Liaison; Dick Adams, Planning Board, Robert Johnson, Conservation Commission

Absent: None

Town Officials: Shawn Brown, Town Manager

Others Present: Barbara Gifford, Park Steward, Linden Park

Agenda

Roll Call: The roll was called with attendance as indicated above.

Review and Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the April 18 committee meeting were reviewed and approved as amended.

Old Business:

- **Purgatory Chasm Walkway.** Shawn Brown reported that there would be a meeting the following day in the Town Council Chambers at the Town Hall with Rhode Island Department of Environmental (DEM) representatives to discuss the proposed walkway and removing brush and undergrowth to open the vista. The Open Space & Fields Committee (OS&F) was asked to have representatives attend. [Note. Mason Hawes and Ralph Thomas attended the meeting.]
- **Continue Review of Results of the Parks Projects Prioritization.** No discussion.
- **Park Procedures and Protocol Workshop.** Discussion deferred to June meeting.
- **Community Garden on Library Grounds.** Ralph reported that nearly all the garden plots had been planted and that things were going well.
- **Demery Park (Steward Assessment).** Discussion deferred to June meeting.
- **Identification of Parks Requiring Stewards.** Discussion deferred to June meeting.

- **Site Visit to West Main Recreation Complex and Community Garden.**
Discussion deferred to June meeting.

- **Properties Updates.** Shawn Brown provided the following information with regard to developments concerning properties in which Middletown has an interest:

- o **Tibbets Farm/Boulevard Properties.** Future uses of these properties is tied to the development of what is now the West Main Recreation Complex and the Town Library, plus the former Navy Lodge site at the corner of West Main Road and Coddington Highway. The latter property is likely to become the Town's within the next twelve months.

The current Town Recreation Plan provides that the softball field now on the West Main Road complex is to be moved the Tibbets Farm/Boulevard properties and that lacrosse fields built there. Other uses of the properties are certainly possible and the Town will contract with a consultant to develop a master plan for them. This could include a use of a portion as a community farm. The deed governing the properties allows a structure to be built. The vision is for development to provide a "Glen-like" property, but one which is easier to maintain.

OS&F will be asked to work with the consultant once one is retained.

o The Valley. He reported that the brownfields grant that had been received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the property had been removed. The grant, which had resulted in the application of EPA regulations to the property and Department of Justice oversight, was no longer necessary and that the issues associated with the property could better be dealt with by the Town, working with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

The principal environmental issues associated with the Valley property were naturally occurring arsenic and the use of Dieldrin, a DDT-type insecticide, at the site when it was a nursery. Testing has shown that there are three "hotspots" where a small amount of soil will need to be replaced.

DEM, applying a risk model, to determine what uses of the property are acceptable is likely to determine that passive recreational uses, e.g., trails, are appropriate. The fence, which the EPA had required, is no longer necessary. Use of the property is acceptable but cannot be encouraged.

Erection of buildings on the property, such as a multi-use barn that could be used as a farmer's market is still possible, but remediation of two acres as a building site and for parking may be necessary.

OS&F will be asked to participate in a project to develop a vision/next

step for the Valley.

New Business

- **Data Base Access.** A software program is being developed that will allow OS&F access to Public Works Department work orders in order to determine work being done on the parks.
- **Steward Communication Protocol.** Discussion deferred to June Meeting.
- **Planning for Tibbets/Boulevard Properties Sustainable Use.** See discussion in Old Business under Properties Updates.
- **The Valley—Moving Forward.** See discussion in Old Business under Properties Updates.
- **Standards for Parks: Benches, Signage, Bicycle Racks, Etc.** OS&F will be asked to develop standards for benches, signs, bicycle racks and other items at Town parks.
- **Site Visits to Other Middletown Parks.** No discussion.
- **Proposed Agenda Items for June Meeting.**
 - o **Purgatory Chasm Walkway Update**
 - o **Continue Review of Results of the Parks Projects Prioritization**

- o Community Garden on Library Grounds**
- o Site Visit to West Main Recreation Complex and Community Garden**
- o Standards for Parks: Benches, Signage, Bicycle Racks, Etc.**
- o Planning for Tibbets/Boulevard Properties Sustainable Use**
- o The Valley—Moving Forward**
- o Properties Updates**
- o Proposed Agenda Items for July Meeting**

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7 p.m. The next meeting of the committee will be at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20, 2012, in the Community Room of the Middletown Police Station.

Ralph Thomas

Recording Secretary